

A
SHORT ACCOUNT

OF THE LATE

DR JOHN PARSONS, PROFESSOR OF ANATOMY
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD;

DR RICHARD HUCK SAUNDERS, PHYSICIAN,
LONDON;

DR CHARLES COLIGNON, PROFESSOR OF
ANATOMY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE;

AND

SIR ALEXANDER DICK OF PRESTONFIELD,
BARONET.

FROM THE

EDINBURGH MEDICAL COMMENTARIES,

VOL. X. PAGE 322. *et seq.*

EDINBURGH, 1786.



2100

THE HONORABLE

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

FOR THE DISTRICT OF

THE HONORABLE

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

FOR THE DISTRICT OF

THE HONORABLE

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

FOR THE DISTRICT OF

THE HONORABLE

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

FOR THE DISTRICT OF

A

SHORT ACCOUNT

OF THE LATE

DR JOHN PARSONS, &c.

ON the 3d of April 1785, died at Oxford, Dr John Parsons, a physician of distinguished eminence, and Professor of Anatomy in the University there. He was the son of Major Parsons of the dragoons, who resided principally in Yorkshire; and in that county Dr Parsons was born in the year 1742. He had his early education at Westminster school; from whence, in the year 1759, he was elected to a studentship in Christ-church College, Oxford. He made choice of medicine as his profession, and prosecuted the study of it with uncommon assiduity, not only at Oxford, but also both at London and Edinburgh. But while he bestowed much attention on every branch of medical knowledge,

knowledge, he at first shewed a particular predilection for natural history and botany. In the latter branch, in particular, he made a very distinguished figure during his stay at Edinburgh. And in the year 1766, he had the honour of obtaining the prize medal, given by Dr Hope, for the most extensive and elegant hortus ficcus.

This, however, was only a prelude to more distinguished honours, which were soon afterwards conferred upon him. The munificence of the late Dr Lee of London, had founded an anatomical professorship in Christ-church; and in 1767, Dr Parsons was elected the first professor, although he had not then been of sufficient standing to obtain any degree in medicine. In consequence of this appointment, his attention, it may naturally be supposed, was more particularly directed to anatomy. Under his direction, a very commodious anatomical theatre was built at Oxford. And for the instruction of his pupils, he provided a set of anatomical preparations, which, for neatness and elegance, have seldom been surpassed. From the time of his appointment to this professorship at Oxford, he read two courses of anatomical lectures every year. And although they were

were calculated rather for the general philosopher, than the medical practitioner, yet they were not only highly instructive to all his audience, but afforded to every discerning student incontestable evidence both of the genius and abilities of the professor.

In the year 1769, he took the degree of Bachelor of Medicine, and was very soon afterwards elected one of the physicians to the Radcliffe Infirmary at Oxford. In the year 1772, he obtained the degree of Doctor of Medicine. And these academical honours were soon followed by more than an ordinary share of private practice: For from his attention and success as a physician, his reputation with the public in general, kept pace with the esteem in which he was held by the University. But although he was soon introduced into very extensive practice, yet the activity of his disposition led him to consider himself as not unequal to still farther toils. Accordingly, in the year 1780, when the establishment of a clinical professorship in the Radcliffe Infirmary, endowed with an ample stipend by the late Chancellor of the University, Lord Litchfield, was finally settled, Dr Parsons was unanimously elected the first professor. In this department also, he read lectures

tures during the winter months, with much credit to himself. But it is not improbable, that the various active employments in which he was engaged, and which necessarily exposed him to fatigue and danger, had some share in overthrowing a constitution naturally strong. He was not, however, cut off by any tedious or painful ailment, but died of a fever in the 44th year of his age.

* * * *

On the 24th of July 1785, died at London, Dr Richard Huck Saunders, a physician of deserved and distinguished eminence. He was the son of — Huck, Esq; who possessed, in the county of Westmoreland, a small estate, which had been in his family for many generations. Dr Huck was born there in the year 1720; and not long after he was born, he lost his father. Although his mother, whose name was Harrison, survived her husband for some years; yet his education was chiefly conducted under the care of a maternal uncle. By him he was sent to the grammar school of Crougland in Cumberland, which was at that time much celebrated in the north of England. There

There he received the rudiments of a classical education, and made very considerable proficiency in the Latin language ; so that, during the whole future course of his life, he was able to compose in that language with much facility and elegance.

He at first intended to pursue his classical education under the direction of another uncle, who was a Fellow of one of the Colleges at Oxford. But this scheme was interrupted by an accident which soon afterwards happened to him. In consequence of a fall from a hay-cart, one of his legs was very much hurt ; and he received, as he always thought, a longitudinal fracture of the tibia. This accident occasioned to him a very tedious confinement. It was followed by a carious ulcer, and a number of successive exfoliations. These continued even to harass him at different periods, during the whole remainder of his life.

By this accident, however, he was led to think of a change of his intended profession, and to apply himself to surgery. In the prosecution of this plan, he was put under the tuition of Mr Neal, a surgeon and apothecary at Penrith, with whom he remained for five years. He
then

then went to London, that he might prosecute his studies with greater advantage. And he became a dressing pupil at St Thomas's Hospital, under Mr John Girle, one of the most eminent surgeons of his time.

After continuing in the line of medical education in London for some years, he entered on the practice of his profession, by becoming a military surgeon. In the year 1745, he was appointed surgeon to Lord Semple's regiment; and he continued in the service of his country, with the armies, both in Scotland and Flanders, till the peace in 1748. Upon the return of the troops to Britain, and the reduction of the regiment to which he belonged, he settled as a medical practitioner, and obtained the degree of Doctor of Medicine from the Marischal College of Aberdeen.

After having practised at Penrith for two years, he accepted of the surgeoncy of the 33d regiment, then at Minorca; in which island he remained with his regiment for three years. After the return of the regiment to Britain, in 1753, they came to Edinburgh; and an opportunity being thus afforded to Dr Huck of attending the lectures at that medical school, he became the pupil of all the professors

professors, whose successful exertions first raised the reputation of Edinburgh as a seminary for medical knowledge. During the course of two successive winter-sessions, he attended the different lectures at Edinburgh with as great assiduity as if he had been but entering on the study of his profession.

He returned with his regiment to England in 1755; and soon afterwards he went out to America under the Earl of Loudoun, who was then appointed Commander in chief, and Governor-general, and to whom his medical abilities were well known during the war in Flanders. He was now promoted to the rank of physician to the army, and served in that capacity during the whole war, much to his own credit, and to the benefit of the troops under his care. In the end of 1762, he returned with the army to Britain, from the successful expedition against the Havannah, but in a state of very bad health. Being advised to visit the continent for the re-establishment of his constitution, he resolved on making a medical tour through Europe. During this tour, he visited the most celebrated hospitals in Germany, Italy, and France: and he embraced every opportunity

nity of making an accurate and candid survey of whatever he could discover to be new and useful in the practice of physic, to the improvement of which he was entirely devoted. These observations were immediately communicated to the late Sir John Pringle, who had, for a long time, been the friend and patron of his merit, and who, in his observations on the army diseases, has oftener than once mentioned him in a way very much to his honour. Fourteen long letters, which Dr Huck wrote upon these subjects, and which are now in the possession of the learned and worthy physician, to whom we are principally indebted for this account of him, give, in the opinion of every able judge who has perused them, a more just, authentic, and judicious estimate of the state of medical practice in the hospitals of Vienna, Boulognia, Rome, Naples, Lyons, and Paris, than is any where to be found.

After his return from the continent, he settled as physician in London, and practised there for many years, with great reputation and success. In 1765, he was admitted a licentiate of the College of Physicians in London; and very soon afterwards he was appointed physician to
the

the Middlesex Hospital. A few years after this, he was appointed physician to St Thomas's Hospital. And he discharged the duties of his office in both, with great credit to himself, and advantage to these charitable establishments. But while he was much esteemed as a physician, he was also well known as a philosopher. He was a distinguished and useful member of the Royal Society of London, and, for many years, held the important office of being one of their council.

In 1777, he married the niece and heiress of the late Sir Charles Saunders, to whom, as a naval commander, his country had been much indebted. By this marriage he became possessed of a large fortune, both in land and money; and it became necessary for him to use the name and arms of Saunders. After bringing him two daughters, who now inherit her fortune, she died in 1780. His health, which had been every winter much affected with pulmonary complaints, now became worse, and his spirits never recovered the shock they received by Mrs Saunders's long illness and death.

Although his practice was, for the last years of his life, often interrupted by his illness, yet
he

he never relinquished it entirely. And his reputation as a physician continued to increase in the esteem of mankind in general, and of his medical friends in particular, till his death, which happened on the 24th of July 1785, to the inexpressible regret of all who were acquainted with his character.

Much might be said of him as a man, and as a physician, did not his long established reputation for humanity, candour, disinterestedness, and medical knowledge, render every attempt of this kind unnecessary. These have exalted his character, in the esteem of mankind, beyond any panegyric. We may only conclude with observing, that the College of Physicians in London, as a proof of the opinion which they entertained of Dr Saunders, voluntarily admitted him one of their Fellows; an honour which has hitherto been almost entirely confined to graduates of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. While this distinguishing mark of approbation, conferred upon Dr Saunders, in the last year of his life, in conjunction with another most respectable medical character, Dr Watson, was highly honourable to these gentlemen, there can be little doubt, that,

that, in the opinion of the public in general, the College did honour to themselves by this proof of their liberality and candour.

* * * *

On the 1st of October 1785, Dr Charles Collignon, Professor of Anatomy in the University of Cambridge, died in that city. Dr Collignon was born in London on the 30th of January 1725. He was the son of Mr Paul Collignon, a native of Hesse Cassell, and minister of the Dutch church in Austin Friars, a man universally esteemed for his learning and piety, as well as for the faithful discharge of his pastoral office. From this, however, he had not an opportunity of deriving these advantages which might have been at first expected; for the Reverend Mr Collignon died at an early period of life, leaving his only son yet in an infant state. By those who superintended his education, he was fixed at the school of Bury, under the Reverend Mr Kynnesman, an able teacher.

After the usual course of school education, he was admitted pensioner of Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1743. Having fixed upon medicine as the profession which he meant to follow,

low, after residing for some time at Cambridge, he visited France and Holland, and spent some time at Leyden and at London in the prosecution of his studies. But the academical part of his medical education was chiefly conducted at Edinburgh, where he not only attended to the lectures of the different professors with great assiduity, but gave many proofs of his own genius, by making a conspicuous figure in the Medical Society, of which he was admitted a member in 1747. And by his conduct there he gained the affection, as well as esteem, of his fellow students.

Upon his return to Cambridge in 1748, he obtained the degree of Bachelor of Physic, from the University there, and settled as a practitioner in that city. He married in 1751, and was elected Professor of Anatomy in Cambridge in 1753. In discharging the duties of this office, he gave public lectures till the year before his death. These, though not conducted upon a very extensive plan, were much esteemed by all his pupils.

But the anatomical chair was not the only academical honour conferred upon him. In 1754, he was created Doctor of Physic, and in

1770,

1770, he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of London. In 1779, he was appointed deputy Regius Professor of Physic at Cambridge; and in 1783, he was appointed Professor of Medicine in Downing College. His conduct and character through life as a man and a physician, were such as gave abundant sanction for those numerous marks of honourable distinction conferred upon him by able judges of literary and medical abilities.

* * * *

On the 10th of November 1785, died at Prestonfield, in the county of Mid Lothian, Sir Alexander Dick, Baronet, the senior member of the Royal College of Physicians in Edinburgh, in the 83d year of his age, a man who, during the whole course of a long life, supported a character which would have done honour to any learned society.

He was born on the 23d of October 1703. He was the third son of Sir William Cuninghame of Caprington, Baronet, by Dame Janet Dick, only surviving child and heiress of Sir James Dick of Prestonfield, Baronet. Having made choice of medicine as the profession he meant to follow,
his

his academical studies in that science were chiefly conducted at Leyden, under the celebrated Dr Boerhaave, then the most eminent medical professor in Europe, of whom he was a great admirer. He obtained the degree of Doctor of Medicine, from the University of Leyden, on the 31st of August 1725. Soon after this he returned to his native country, and had the honour of receiving a second diploma for the degree of Doctor of Medicine, which was conferred upon him by the University of St Andrew's, on the 23d of January 1727. A few days after this, he was inrolled in the list of the College of Physicians in Edinburgh, and was raised to the rank of a Fellow in that Society on the 7th of November following.

After being honoured with these marks of distinction in his native country, which are rarely conferred on young men, unless of conspicuous merit, he made the tour of Europe, and resided a considerable time in Italy, where his elegant taste and classical knowledge could not fail to afford him a high degree of gratification. On his return to Britain, he was induced to settle as physician in Pembroke-shire, by his friend Mr Hooke, who inherited

rited an ample fortune in that county. He there practised medicine with great reputation, and much success, for several years. And during this period, a circumstance occurred, which strongly marked his liberal mind. A gentleman who had no near relations, and who considered himself as having been repeatedly indebted to Sir Alexander for the preservation of his life, intended to have made him his heir, and had actually executed a deed for that purpose. But not long after this, by the death of his immediate elder brother, Sir William Dick, he succeeded, agreeable to the entail and patent, to the estate and honours of Prestonfield. Upon this event, he represented to the gentleman who intended to have made him his heir, that he was now possessed of a very ample fortune, and he persuaded him, to substitute in his place a deserving young man, to whom that fortune, in consequence of this advice, devolved in a short time after.

Sir Alexander, upon his brother's death, fixed his residence at the family seat of Prestonfield, which is little more than a mile from Edinburgh. And although he entirely
 relinquished

relinquished the practice of medicine, yet he cultivated a friendly and intimate correspondence with the physicians of that city. At the annual election of the College of Physicians in the year 1756, he was chosen their President. To this office he was re-elected for seven years successively. But he then positively declined accepting of it any longer, as he considered it to be an injury to the merits of other gentlemen, that there should not be some rotation. His attachment to the College, however, and his earnest endeavours to promote its interest, continued without any abatement. No man was more liberal in contributing towards the building of their hall, and in using his best endeavours to forward that and every other undertaking, where he thought their interest concerned.

But the College of Physicians were by no means the only set of men who were indebted to his exertions ; for he possessed public spirit in the highest degree ; and on all occasions he demonstrated the strongest desire to promote what was beneficial to his country in general, and to the city of Edinburgh in particular. There is no person to whom the public
is

is more indebted for the many excellent roads which have lately been made in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh; and most of the internal improvements of the city, he exerted himself in promoting, with an activity which did him the highest honour.

When the seeds of the true Rhubarb were introduced into Britain by Dr Mounsey, he not only bestowed great attention on the culture of the plant, but also on the drying of the root, and preparing it for the market. And his success in these particulars was so great, that the Society in London, for the encouragement of arts and manufactures, sent him a golden medal, as a testimony of their approbation. Several years before his death, as a testimony of esteem and gratitude for his services, a picture of him was placed in the library of the College of Physicians in Edinburgh; and that body, at their first meeting after his death, were all dressed in mourning, a slight external mark of their feelings for the loss which their Society had sustained by the death of such a member. For although he had arrived at a period of life, when death is, with the majority of mankind, perhaps rather to be wished
for

for than otherwise ; yet, as not only his judgment, but even his spirit of exertion remained unimpaired, both they and the public were, by this event, deprived of an useful member of society.

Whatever object engaged his attention, he was steady in the pursuit ; and his conduct was always marked by the strictest fairness and integrity. This disposition led him to be constant and warm in his friendship. And this conduct procured to him universal love and esteem. But he was not more amiable in public, than in private life. For with all his disposition for activity and exertion, the striking features of his character were mildness and sweetness of temper. He possessed the happy disposition of viewing the fair side of every object, which was not only the source of much happiness to himself and his family, but of universal benevolence to mankind. The serenity and cheerfulness which accompanied his conduct through life, were the attendants even of his last moments, for he died in the easiest way, and with a smile upon his countenance.

ADVERTISEMENT

OF

MEDICAL LECTURES, &c.

ABOUT the 1st of May, Dr Duncan will begin at Edinburgh, his lectures on the *Materia Medica*. This course, which is given only during the summer-session, will continue for three months, and will be illustrated, not only by specimens of the different articles, and of the different formulæ of the London and Edinburgh Pharmacopœias, but also by a variety of pharmaceutical experiments.

Before the commencement of this course, Dr Duncan proposes to publish an improved edition of his catalogue of the *Materia Medica*, intended as a synopsis for his lectures on that subject. In the former editions of this list, the articles were arranged alphabetically. But besides the officinal, the Linnæan, and the English name of each article, it contained also an account of the natural order to which it belonged, of the source from whence it could be most advantageously obtained, particularly, whether it should be gathered in the fields, raised in gardens, or imported from abroad, of the different fixed formulæ of the Edinburgh Pharmacopœia into which it enters,
and

and of the different extemporaneous formulæ under which it might be most conveniently used. To this list, which will be reprinted with a few alterations, he now means to add two other arrangements of the *Materia Medica*, one according to the natural orders to which the different articles belong, the other according to their obvious operation on the human body, or generally received medical virtues. But though these lists will, in many cases, give a distinct view of the affinities of different substances, with respect to medical powers, yet, in his lectures, he proposes, as formerly, to treat of each article in alphabetical order, giving a full account of the natural and medical history of those most frequently employed in modern practice. During the winter, Dr Duncan reads lectures on the Theory and on the Practice of Medicine, and on the most important cases of patients subjected to chronical diseases, treated at the Dispensary.

Pupils are admitted to attend Dr Duncan's lectures on the following terms :

1. For the lectures on the Theory of Medicine, One Guinea.
2. For the lectures on the Practice, Two Guineas.
3. For the lectures on the *Materia Medica*, Two Guineas.
4. For the case-lectures, One Guinea.

Those who attend any of the three first mentioned courses, are entitled to the case-lectures, for the payment of half a guinea at each course,
as

as medicine-money. The fee for a perpetual pupil to all Dr Duncan's lectures is four guineas, exclusive of medicine-money when they attend the case-lectures, or five guineas including the case-lectures.

About the 1st of May, Dr Webster will begin at Edinburgh his summer course of Chemical Lectures. This course continues for three months, and is repeated thrice every year, beginning in February, May, and November. The fee for each course is two guineas, and those who attend it are also entitled to the case-lectures at the Dispensary, for the payment of the medicine-money only.

* * * *

About thirty years ago, a monument was erected in the Grayfriars church-yard at Edinburgh, to the memory of a young gentleman who had died during the course of his medical studies at that place. It contained the following inscription on a plain tablet of freestone :

" Here lyeth interred, John Barnet, student of physick, who was born on the 15th of March 1733, and departed this life on the 1st of April 1755.

Peace gentlest shade ; this from a brother's hand,
Who must not say what justice might demand ;
Yet this I must, not each proud marble can,
The dust beneath was truly once a man ;

From

From virtue's pleasing paths he never rov'd,
 Of man a lover, and by man belov'd ;
 For others ills he griev'd, contemn'd his own ;
 To none severe, save to himself alone.
 To him fair Science oped her useful page,
 Rich with experience, and the spoils of age ;
 Too early lost, lamented here he lies,
 Nip'd like a rose-bud, ere it blows it dies.
 Death, lest mankind he from the tomb should save,
 Snatch'd him thus early to the peaceful grave."

As this monument had, from different accidents, gone into such disrepair as to be in danger of falling down altogether ; and as there was reason to presume that the affectionate brother of this once promising young man, might be situated at a great distance from Edinburgh, the Æsculapian Society, who have given many proofs of their desire of encouraging merit among the living, by perpetuating the remembrance of departed worth, made an application to the proper officer, the Dean of Guild of the city, for permission to repair it. This is accordingly now done, with the addition of the following inscription, on a freeze under the cornice :

" Quisquis hoc sustulerit aut jusserit,
 Ultimus suorum moriatur.

Repaired by the Æsculapian Club. Edinburgh,
 1785."

Med Hist
 WZ
 260
 S559
 1786

